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March 15, 1979

Mr. Charles H. Chase
12 Orchard Drive
Corning, New York

Dear Mr. Chase,

I refer to your letter of November 20, 1978 to President Carter. A response to your letter was delayed since it had originally been sent to the Department of Justice for reply.

I hope the following information answers your questions.

1. Under our laws members of Congress are authorized by the appropriate officials of the Congress to travel in pursuit of their official responsibilities, such as oversight and investigation of operations of the U.S. Government abroad.

2. Protection of the interests of Americans overseas is indeed a responsibility of the Department of State, but Congress is responsible for oversight of the Department's activities in this regard. Congressman Ryan was a member of the Sub-committee on International Operations of the House International Relations Committee, which from time to time has held hearings on the protection of U.S. citizens' interests overseas and other consular matters. Official travel to foreign countries is ordinarily coordinated with the Department.

3. It is my understanding that Congressman Ryan's trip to Guyana was duly authorized by Congressional authorities. However, if you wish further information you should inquire further with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.

I carefully reviewed the other comments in your letter. Congressional travel is one of the aspects of our government operations that sets the United States apart from most other countries. It is part of our system of the separation of powers that is the hallmark of a democratic society.

If I can be of any further assistance or answer any further questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Richard A. McCoy
Office of Caribbean Affairs

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CHARLES H. CHASE
18 ORCHARD DRIVE
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November 20, 1978

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

In an article about Congressman Ryan's Guyana investigation in today's local daily newspaper, The Leader, the United Press International states, "President Carter hailed Ryan for his attempts to investigate the People's Temple and the FBI said in San Francisco it had assigned agents to determine whether there had been a conspiracy or violation of U. S. statutes."

No other news I have heard or read about the incident offers an explanation about the authority under which Congressman Ryan acted nor is it suggested that any needed investigation was properly a matter for the Department of State. I'd appreciate receiving your responses to these questions about the matter:

1) Upon what authority does a congressman pursue concerns about Americans who choose to reside in another nation ?

2) Is not such concern a matter for the U. S. Department of State since it involves another sovereign nation ?

3) What public funds and material resources of goods and services supported Congressman Ryan's trip ? If used, by what authority are they available for such a purpose ?

I am not dispassionate in my interest. I object to a congressman's individual intervention in a matter involving another sovereign nation. Surely, we would not countenance other nationals who did not possess diplomatic status intervening with persons and groups who chose to live in this country. Congressmen are members of a corporate body

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whose authority is within that body and its legislative process. It is an executive responsibility to relate to concerns about American citizens in other nations, primarily through the Department of State. Public funds and the public trust are not vested in individual congressmen to pursue their own interests, whether or not they are noble, whether selfish or unselfish.

Irrespective of the conditions under which the Americans in the People's Temple were living, many of them as well as Congressman Ryan and many of his party are dead — unjustifiably dead. We have different procedures to care for such matters. To hail one who chose not to use them as a substitute for expressing sorrow over his death obscures the principle of the matter's appropriate handling. Now is the time to place the incident in perspective to prevent a similar situation's occurrence in the future.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Chase